

GILA NATIONAL FOREST



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Preparations Underway for Catwalk Reconstruction

Glenwood, NM; June 18, 2014—Gila National Forest personnel met June 12 with representatives from Central Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration to begin the process of reconstructing the Catwalk National Recreation Trail and parking facilities along Whitewater Creek.

Funding for reconstruction was awarded through an Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads program in early May. “The first order of business will be completing a hydraulics and hydrology study in Whitewater Creek”, says District Ranger Debbie Cress. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began conducting these studies last week. Cress adds the next step will be to incorporate results of these studies into preliminary design of trails and bridges. Cress plans to host a public meeting in late summer to provide an opportunity for local residents to hear first-hand updates on planning efforts and to share ideas about design elements for the Catwalk.

Central Federal Lands is leading the project, including National Environmental Policy Act compliance, required permitting, and contracting for reconstruction work. They estimate an opportunity for potential contractors to bid on this project in late 2014, with work anticipated to begin in early 2015 and be completed by summer of 2015. “The public can expect closures of the picnic area and trail during critical phases of reconstruction next year”, Cress noted. She intends to provide opportunities for recreationists to observe work in progress when it is safe to do so.

Currently, the Catwalk remains open from the picnic area approximately 3/8 mile in along the historic trail to the CCC steps. Efforts to clear metal debris beyond the closure are underway and the Forest anticipates reopening Whitewater Creek to off-trail exploration at the end of this year’s monsoon season. Closure of the universally accessible trail and Whitewater Creek from the CCC steps to the junction of Gold Dust Trail #41 remains in effect.

Please contact the Glenwood Ranger District office for further information, 575.539.2481.